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Biological
& Medical
Serials

# Ophthalmic Literature

VOL. II. JULY, 1912. No. 7.

Edited and Published by EDWARD JACKSON.
WILLIAM H. CRISP, Assistant Editor.
Published monthly. Price Five Dollars per year in advance.
530 Metropolitan Building. Denver, Colorado, U. S. A.

## THE HISTORY OF OPHTHALMOLOGY.

The literature dealing with the history of ophthalmology is scattering and scanty. Except the work of Hirschberg there is almost nothing that purports to be a complete or systematic treatise on the subject. Since the use of the ophthalmoscope and the test lenses opened the new era in ophthalmology, any one who entered upon this special department of medicine, if possessed of average intelligence and sufficient energy to carry on any line of individual study, soon found himself so busy attending to patients, or working on the fascinating problems of ophthalmic science or art, opened by new means of investigation, or suggested by similar studies in other directions, that he had no time or energy to devote to historical research.

As yet only a very few, like Hirschberg, have found in the history of medicine a recreation bringing recuperation of power for work, yet leaving a permanent result of value to their contemporaries and successors.

But the time has come when this subject should be taken up seriously, and by a considerable number of practical ophthalmologists. The mass of those engaged in ophthalmic practice are woefully, if not culpably, ignorant of the history of their specialty. It would be easy to multiply instances of the forgetting of an important discovery, invention, or method of procedure, which has subsequently been brought forward as new. Transillumination, and the Anagnostakis-Hotz operation for entropion are familiar instances. It is not so generally remembered that for entropion the ancient Egyptians "everted the lashes by producing cicatrices in the skin of the lid by actual cautery or chemical caustics."

Of late years historical study has been favored in the preparation of complete articles, or monographs, for such literary undertakings, as the Graefe-Saemisch Hand-buch, or Norris and Oliver's system. Harlan's chapter on operations on the lids in the latter ,from which the above quotation is taken, reflects such careful historical study; and in the recent System of Ophthalmic Operations, edited by Casey Wood, some of the articles show a definite attempt to place before the reader the main facts of the history of the operations with which they deal.

The early history of cataract extraction has received attention

from a number of writers. There have been varied attempts to ascertain who invented spectacles. Chevalier Taylor, because of his claim to have operated for strabismus, has received a fair amount of attention. Hirschberg's work on Arabic Ophthalmology, has aroused the interest of certain colleagues in the ophthalmic history of other countries. In America Hubbell's "Ophthalmology in America from 1800 to 1870," is a valuable biographic study. But these scattering contributions to the history of ophthalmology bring out strongly the extent of the field as yet untouched.

The facilities for such studies in history are better now than they ever have been before. In a few of the larger medical libraries on both sides of the Atlantic plenty of material has been amassed to engage men for years in its careful sifting. More will come to the surface as the interest of the profession in general is directed to such historical studies. As a model for studies of this kind we may mention the papers of Pergens upon "Tests For Visual Acuity," which have appeared from time to time during the last four years in the **Annales d'Oculistique.** Most of the matter brought together has been drawn from the literature of the last half century; and Pergens' work illustrates how much may be done to arrange and render available to every student the great achievements of this formative period of ophthalmology. In some respects it can be better done now than at any later period. We hope that in the Index of Ophthalmology articles of historic interest will come to occupy a larger and larger place.

## THE OPHTHALMIC YEAR-BOOK.

The Ophthalmic Year-Book will be resumed. The effort of the trustees of the Knapp Memorial Fund of the Section on Ophthalmology of the American Medical Association, to obtain support for the Ophthalmic Year-Book, is meeting with marked success; and seems likely to secure, within the membership of that body, as many subscribers as have hitherto supported the work from all countries. Other plans have been suggested for securing a permanent financial support for the year-book; so that the financial side of the problem is being successfully met.

The equally important problem of providing for the preparation of the year-book will have to be solved more slowly. But if the work is to be continued permanently there must be found a considerable number of writers who will do the editorial work that such a publication entails. The qualifications for the work include a knowledge of the literature of the subject dealt with; an interest in the progress of ophthalmic science; a reading knowledge of German and French, and a capacity to do work at the right time. Any worker who will come to aid in this work with an appreciation of its importance, and a determination that what he undertakes shall be well done, will be heartily welcome to the editorial staff of the Ophthalmic Year-Book.

## BOOK NOTICES.

Schlaefke, W. General-Register zu Albrecht von Graefe's Archiv für Ophthalmologie, Band LXXI-LXXX. Leipsic: Verlag von Wilhelm Engelmann.

Each number of "Graefe's Archives" contains but a few articles, and there are but three numbers in each volume. Still, with three or four volumes appearing each year, the need for a general index for them is soon felt by any one who seeks to avail himself of the contributions to ophthalmology which they contain.

# Index of Ophthalmology

### Diagnosis.

**Dufour.** Reflexless Ophthalmoscopy. Soc. Fr. d'Opht., May.
**Krauss, F.** Probable Pseudoglioma. Sec. on Ophth., Coll. Phys., Phila., April 18.
**Langdon, H. M.** Scotometer. Ibid.
**Meierhof, E. L.** Portable Electric Lamp. Arch. of Ophth., xli, p. 385.
**Myashita.** Ophthalmotonometry. Nippon Gank., Zachi, May.
**Pauli, R.** Visual Acuity Tests and Heterochromic Photometry. Zeit. f. Biol., Münch. u. Berlin, lviii, p. 17.
**Rübel, E.** Transillumination of Iris in Normal and Glaucomatous Eyes. (Bibl.) Graefe's Arch. f. Ophth., lxxxii, p. 317.
**Ziegler, S. L.** Zeiss-Loupe. Sec. on Ophth. Coll. Phys., Phila., April 18.
Repeated Titles. **Armaignac** (i, p. 31) Ophthalmoscope, x, p. 380. **Golowin** (i, p. 134) Ibid., p. 381. **Servel** (i, p. 47) Ibid., p. 380. **Van der Hoeve** (i, p. 164) Arch. of Ophth., xli, p. 350.

### THERAPEUTICS.

**Benedetti, A.** Radio-therapy in Eye Diseases. Soc. Fr. d'Opht., May.
**DeWaele, H.** Disinfectant Properties of Iodine in Ophthalmology. Soc. Belge d'Opht., No. 33, p. 83.
**Rice, M.** Value of Internal Medication in Eye Diseases. Jour. Ophth. Otol. and Laryngol., xviii, p. 289.
**Valdes Lambea.** Intoxication from Instillation of Atropin in Eye. Rev. de San. Mil., 3, ii, p. 96.
**Wolffberg.** Syrgol in Eye Diseases. Woch. f. Therap. u. Hyg. d. Auges, No. 29.
Repeated Titles. **Darier** (ii, p. 36) Ophthalmoscope, x, p. 414. **Dufaure** (i, p. 119) Ibid., p. 414.

### OPERATIONS.

**Hirsch, G.** Control of Post-operative Ocular Inflammations. Woch. f. Therap. u. Hyg. d. Auges, No. 22.
**Lagrange.** Perforating Anterior Sclerectomy for Affections Other than Glaucoma. (Bibl.) Arch. d.'Opht., xxxii, p. 327.
**Lewis, A. C.** Surgery of Eyeball for Preservation and Restoration of Sight. Miss. Med. Month., June, p. 35.
**Ribas Valero.** Sub-conjunctival Injections to Facilitate Ocular Operations. Arch. de Oft., xii, p. 233.
**Welton, C. B.** Hemorrhage as Cause of Blindness. Ophth. Rec., xxi, p. 307.
**Wolffberg.** Eye Bandage. Woch. f. Therap. u. Hyg. d. Auges, No. 24.
Repeated Titles. **Agricola** (ii, p. 36) Ophthalmoscope, x, p. 410.

## REFRACTION.

**Bailliart, P.** Total Correction of Myopia. Ophthalmoscope, x, p. 411.

**Button, C. A., Wolcott, C.** and **Champlin, H. W.** Is Cycloplegia Necessary in Refraction? Med. Coun., xvii, p. 263.

**Domec.** Massage and Myotics in Myopia. Soc. Fr. d'Opht., May.

**Franz, W.** High Myopia in Young. Cent. f. p. Augenh., xxxvi, p. 186.

**Harris, C. M.** Hyoscin in Refraction. Penn. Med. Jour., xv, p. 767.

**Imaii.** Relation Between Corneal Radius and Cylinder. Nippon Gank. Zachi, May.

**Izakawa.** Transitory Reduction of Refraction in Diabetes. Ibid., June.

**Jaspers, I.** The Myopia Question. Zeit. f. Augenh., xxvii, p. 495.

**Lewis, D. H.** Systemic Diseases Arising from Errors of Refraction. Northwest Med., iv, p. 207.

**Myashita.** Macular Changes in High Myopia. Nippon Gank. Zachi, April.

**Neeper, E. R.** Epileptic Seizures Stopping After Refractive Correction. Colo. Ophth. Soc., March 16.

**Oppenheimer, E. H.** Three-Lens Spectacles. Woch. f. Therap. u. Hgy. d. Auges, Aug. 24. Ophthalmoscope, x, p. 408.

**Risley, S. D.** Anomalies of Refraction; Their Relation to Abnormalities of Ocular Balance. Penn. Med. Jour., xv, p. 761.

**Saggau, C.** Paresis of Accommodation in Diphtheria. Hospitalstidende, lv, June 12. Jour. A. M. A., July 20, p. 236.

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**Thorington, J.** Prescribing of Glasses by Family Physician. Penn. Med. Jour., xv, p. 776.

Repeated Titles. **Bogatsch** (i, p. 151) Ophthalmoscope, x, p. 411. **Dianoux** (ii, p. 19) Ibid., p. 411. **Dufour** (i, p. 120) Ibid., p. 407. **Hesse** (i, p. 60) Ibid., p. 411. **Mayer** (i, p. 22) Ibid., p. 407. **Siebenlist** (i, p. 60) Ibid., p. 411. **Zurkowski** (i, p. 165) Arch. de Oft., xii, p. 268.

## OCULAR MOVEMENTS.

**Butler, T. H.** Is There Hemeralopia in Miners' Nystagmus? Ophthalmoscope, x, p. 300.

**Dodds, S.** Behavior of Extraocular Muscles in General Anaesthesia. Ill. Med. Jour., xxii, p. 39.

**Fage.** Paralysis of Ocular Muscles with Trauma of Orbital Margin. Arch. d'Opht., xxxii, p. 282.

**Geissler, C. M.** Mimetic Action of Ocular Muscles. Zeit. f. Psychol. u Physiol. d. Sinnesorg, lx, p. 241.

**Haass.** Technique of Advancement. Woch. f. Therap. u. Hyg. d. Auges, No. 25.

**Hansell, H. F.** and **Reber, W.** The Ocular Muscles., 2 Ed., 223 pages. Phila., P. Blakiston's Son & Company.

**Kinedinst, J. F.** Recurrent Third Nerve Paralysis. Penn. Med. Jour., xv, p. 773.

**Koenig, M.** Unilateral Traumatic Ophthalmoplegia. Rev. Neurol., xx, p. 125.

**Kumagai.** Trochlear Paralysis in Abdominal Typhoid. Nippon Gank. Zachi, May.

**Lagleyze, P.** Congenital Vertical Strabismus. Arch. d'Opht., xxxii, p. 338.

**Lagrange, F. C.** Muscle Balance vs. Duction Tests. Iowa Med. Jour., xviii, p. 377.

**Lempp, H.** Position of Rest of Eyeball. Zeit. f. Augenh., xxvii, p. 487.

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Norman, A. C. Miners' Nystagmus. Brit. Med. Jour., July 13, p. 68.

Ohrvall, H. Movements of Eye in Fixation. Upsala Lakareforenings Forhandl., xvii, No. 6.

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Tacke. Congenital Absence of Inferior Rectus. Soc. Belge d'Opht., No. 33, p. 35.

Thornett, M. Early Treatment of Squint. Austra. Med. Gaz., May.

Wingeroth. Diminution of Movements in Myopia. Zeitschr. f. Schulges., No. 5.

Repeated Titles. Bielschowsky (i, p. 76) Ophthalmoscope, x, p. 394. Blanco (i, p. 60) Ibid., p. 394. Campos (i, p. 35) Ibid., p. 408. Gonin (i, p. 76) Ibid., p. 394. Salus (i, p. 5) Ophth. Lit., vol. ii, p. 95. Terrien (i, p. 33) Ophthalmoscope, x, p. 393. Uffenorde (ii, p. 86) Münch. Med. Woch. lix, p. 1277. Van Lint (i, p. 87) Ophthalmoscope, x, p. 392.

## CONJUNCTIVA.

Addario la Ferla, G. Significance of Some Cell Inclusions Found in Normal and Pathologic Conjunctivas. Ann. di Ottal., xli, p. 255. Experimental Trachoma in Apes. Ibid., p. 278.

Botteri, A. Studies of Trachoma Inclusion, Blennorrhea, and Vernal Conjunctivitis. Klin. M. f. Augenh., June, p. 653.

Brückner, A. Symblepharon Formation with Corneal Ulcer. Zeit. f. Augenh., xxvii, p. 505.

Colombo, G. L. Antigonococcic Serum in Ophthalmia Neonatorum, and Its Mode of Action. (Bibl.) Clin. Ocul., xii, p. 979.

Fuchs, E. Micro-organism of Trachoma. Arch. de Oft., xii, p. 256.

Delord and Revel. Diphtheritic Conjunctivitis. Clin. Opht., xviii, p. 368.

Göppert, F. Pathogenesis and Treatment of Ocular Eczema. Arch. f. Augenh., lxxi, p. 320.

Gross, J. Vernal Conjunctivitis. Amer. Jour. Ophth., xxix, p. 166.

Izikawa. Phlyctenule in Tuberculous Diathesis. Nippon Gank. Zachi, June.

Kuwahara. Pannus with Blennorrhea. Ibid., May.

Landolt, M. Symmetric Lipodermoid of Conjunctiva. Soc. Fr. d'Opht., May.

Lindner, K. The Trachoma Question. Arch. of Ophth., xli, p. 333.

Lloyd, R. L. Tuberculin in Phlyctenular Conjunctivitis. Jour. Ophth. Otol., and Laryngol., xviii, p. 272.

Meyerhof, M. Vernal Conjunctivitis with Trachoma, and as a Family Disease. Klin. M. f. Augenh., June, p. 641.

Murakami. Vernal Conjunctivitis. Nippon Gank. Zachi, May.

Nettle, A. Trachoma. Med. Times, xl, p. 196.

Newman, F. A. Conjunctiva. Austra. Med. Jour., May.

Nuel, J. P. Prophylaxis and Complications of Ocular Blennorrhea in Newborn. Soc. Belge d'Opht., No. 33, p. 52.

Oki. Pathologic Anatomy of Blennorrhea. Nippon Gank. Zachi, May.

Owuci. General Treatment in Endemic Conjunctivitis. Ibid.

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mous Conjunctival Hyperplasia from Trachoma. Compt. Rend. Soc. de Biol., lxxii, p. 241.

**Sakaguci.** Trachoma. Nippon Gank. Zachi, June.

Saving Infants' Eyes (Massachusetts.) Med. Rev. of Rev., xviii, p. 455.

**Schmeichler.** Trachoma Danger of Moravia. Wien. Med. Woch., lxii, p. 1813, 1905.

**Tristamo.** Cusilol in Trachoma. Clin. Opht., xviii, p. 373.

**Tull, F. E.** Trachoma. New Mex. Med. Jour., viii, p. 250.

**Sokoloff, M. D.** Granular Conjunctivitis. Russky Vratch, March 31.

**Velez, D. M.** Antigonococcic Serum in Blennorrhagic Ophthalmia. Arch. de Oft., xii, p. 258.

**Von Herrenschwand, F.** Experiments with Airol for Gonorrheal Ophthalmia. Graefe's Arch. f. Ophth., lxxxii, p. 372.

**Wakisaka.** Bacteriology of Infectious Conjunctivitis. Nippon Gank. Zachi, March.

**Weekers.** Etiology of Ophthalmia Neonatorum. Le Scalpel, March 24.

Repeated Titles. **Colombo** (ii, p. 68) Ophthalmoscope, x, p. 415. **Jacovides** (i, p. 121) Ibid., p. 414.

## CORNEA AND SCLERA.

**Colombo, G. L.** Pathogenesis of Eczematous Kerato-conjunctivitis. Pensiero Med., ii, p. 81.

**Coppez, H.** Trephining of Sclero-corneal Limbus for Staphylomatous Leucoma. Soc. Belge d'Opht., No. 33, p. 29.

**Braunschweig.** Extreme Keratoconus. Klin. M. f. Augenh., June, p. 760.

**Doret, F.** Neuroparalytic Keratitis. Rev. Méd. de la Suisse Romande, April.

**Fradking, S.** Infectious Ulcer of Cornea Benefited by Paraspecific Serotherapy. Clin. Ophth., xviii, p. 371.

**Frank, M.** Interstitial Keratitis. Chicago Ophth. Soc., Feb. 19.

**Gunnufsen, T.** Serpent Ulcer and Intraocular Pressure. (Bibl.) Klin. M. f. Augenh., June, p. 717.

**Kapuscinski, W.** Prognosis of Keratomalacia. Graefe's Arch. f. Ophth., lxxxii, p. 229.

**Kusama.** Treatment of Pannus. Nippon Gank. Zachi, May.

**Magitot, A.** Transplantation of Human Cornea Previously Preserved in Antiseptic Fluid. Jour. A. M. A., July 6, p. 16.

Keratoplasty and Corneal Regeneration. Arch. d'Opht., xxxii, p. 361.

**Masuda.** Treatment of Rodent Ulcer. Nippon Gank. Zachi, May.

**Mejia, J.** Spontaneous Cure of Traumatic Suppurative Kerato-iritis. Arch. de Oft., xii, p. 243.

**Pfingst, A. O.** Restoration of Vision by Plastic Surgery of Cornea. Ky. Med. Jour., July, p. 551.

**Pontius, P. J.** Extract of Suprarenal Gland in Acute Corneal Staphyloma. Wills Hosp. Ophth. Soc., April 1.

**Saito.** Mycotic Keratitis. Nippon Gank. Zachi, June.

**Sakaii.** Band-like Corneal Opacity. Ibid., April.

**Siegrist, A.** and **Kottmann, K.** Etiology of Keratoconus. Deut. Zeit. f. Chir 116, p. 722.

**Spratt, C. N.** Treatment of Scleritis with Tuberculin. Jour.-Lancet, xxxii, p. 286.

**Suganuma.** Leprous Punctate Keratitis. Nippon Gank. Zachi, May.

**Sweet, W. M.** Interstitial Keratitis. Sec. on Ophth. Coll. Phys., Phila., March 21.

**Terebinski, V. I.** Corneal Nevus. Russk. Vratch., x, p. 1642.

**Terlinck, H.** Ring Ulcer of Cornea. Soc. Belge d'Opht., No. 33, p. 37.

**Verderame, F.** Aspergillus Keratomycosis. (Bibl.) Ann. di Ott., xli, p. 223.

**Wilson, J. A.** Keratitis as a Cause of Myopia. (Bibl.) Ophthalmoscope, x, p. 364.
**Wittmer, A.** Corneal Opacity in New Born. Strassburg Diss.
**Zade, M.** Antibodies of Cornea. Graefe's Arch. f. Ophth., lxxxii, p. 183.
Repeated Titles. **Attias** (ii, p. 69) Ophth. Rev., xxx, p. 219. **Kaz** (ii, p, 54) Ophthalmoscope, x, p. 415. **Tertsch** (i, p. 107) Ibid., p. 400.

## ANTERIOR CHAMBER AND PUPIL.

**Goldflam, S.** Pupillary Phenomena. Wien. Klin. Woch., xxv, p. 991 and 1045.
**Hesse, R.** Contraction of Pupil with Near Seeing. Klin. M. f. Augenh., June, p. 740.
**Kahn, R.** Binocular Association of Pupils. Arch. f. Physiol. 145, Ht. 5 and 6.
**Mills, R. G.** Polycoria. Bull. of Manila Med. Soc., iv, p. 119.
**Santos Fernandez, J.** Adrenalin Mydriasis. An. de Oft., xv, p. 1.
**Strickler, D. A.** Mydriasis and Cycloplegia of Unknown Etiology. Colo. Ophth. Soc., March 16.

## UVEAL TRACT.

**Adam, C.** Iritis. Med. Klin., viii, p. 1079.
**Armstrong, G. C.** Tubercle of Choroid. So. Calif. Pract., xxvii, June.
**Brown, E. V. L.** Peculiar Proliferating Choroiditis. Graefe's Arch. f. Ophth., lxxxii, p. 300.
Special Form of Proliferating Choroiditis. Chicago Ophth. Soc., Feb. 19.
**Clement, C. C.** Tubercle of Choroid. Ibid.
**Derby, G.** Treatment of Tuberculosis of Eye. Phila. Polyclin. Ophth. Soc., April 11.
**Gonzalez, J. de J.** Leproma of Iris Treated by X-ray. An. de Oft., xiv, p. 485.
**Leboucq, G.** Tubercular Cyclitis. (Dis.) Soc. Belge d'Opht., No. 33, p. 85.
**Max, W.** Iris Atrophy and Epibulbar Sarcoma in Xeroderma Pigmentosum. (Bibl.) Klin. M. f. Augenh., June, p. 750.
**Münch, K.** Vermicular Spasm of Sphincter of Pupil. Ibid., p. 745.
**Posey, W. C.** Tuberculin in Tubercle of Choroid. Wills Hosp. Ophth. Soc., April 1.
**Suganuma.** Ocular Tuberculosis. Nippon Gank. Zachi, June.
**Truc, H.** Chronic Tubercular Uveitis. Soc. Fr. d'Opht., May.
Repeated Titles. **Eppenstein** (i, p. 90) Ophthalmoscope, x, p. 400. **Meller** (i, p. 139) Ibid., p. 385. **Silva** (i, p. 139) Ibid., p. 400.

## SYMPATHETIC OPHTHALMIA.

**Coppez.** Sympathetic Ophthalmia. Soc. Belge d'Opht., No. 33, p. 26.
**Fagin, R.** Sympathetic Ophthalmia. Memphis Med. Mo., xxxii, p. 13.
**Ferguson, E. S.** Sympathetic Ophthalmia. Okla. State Med. Assn., v, p. 52.
**Saito.** Sympathetic Ophthalmia. Nippon Gank. Zachi, May.
**Weekers.** Sympathetic Amblyopia. Soc. Belge d'Opht., No. 33, p. 61.
**Zirm, E.** Sympathetic Affection with Cataract Extraction; Tuberculin Treatment. Arch. f. Augenh., lxxi, p. 314.
Repeated Titles. **Deutschmann** (ii, p. 39) Ophth. Rev., xxx, p. 213.

## GLAUCOMA.

**Bach, L.** Pathology and Therapy of Glaucoma. Deut. Med. Woch., xxxviii, p. 1217.
**Clausnizer, T.** Influence of Diathermia on Intraocular Pressure. Klin. M. f. Augenh., June, p. 755.

**Cusner.** Total Linear Sclerectomy for Chronic Glaucoma. Soc. Belge d'Opht., No. 33, p. 13.

**Dor, L.** Unilateral Glaucoma with Congenital Malformations. La Clin. Opht., xviii, p. 338.

**Fricker, E.** Pathogenesis of Glaucoma. Klin. M. f. Augenh., June, p. 723.

**Gauthier.** Acute Bilateral Glaucoma; Iridectomy in One Eye, Sclerectomy in the Other. Soc. Belge d'Opht., No. 33, p. 28.

**Gunnufsen, T.** Serpent Ulcer and Intraocular Pressure. (Bibl.) Klin. M. f. Augenh., June, p. 717.

**Imaii.** Iridencleisis in Glaucoma. Nippon Gank. Zachi, May.

**Kleczkowski, T.** Eosinophilia in Glaucoma. Wiener Klin. Woch., xxv, p. 877.

**Knapp, P.** Influence of Massage on Tension of Normal and Glaucomatous Eyes. (Bibl.) Klin. M. f. Augenh., June, p. 691.

**Lagrange, F.** Surgical Procedures for Modifying Intraocular Tension. Bull. de la Acad. de Med., lxvii, p. 407.

**Löhlein, W.** Glaucoma. Wurzburger Abhdl., xii, Ht. 6.

**Myashita.** Glaucoma with Cataract. Nippon Gank. Zachi, June.

**Onishi.** Newer Operations for Glaucoma. Ibid.

**Posey, W. C.** Miotics in Chronic Non-inflammatory Glaucoma. Phil. Polyclin. Ophth. Soc., April 11.

**Rollet, E.** Operation for Glaucoma. Ophthalmoscope, x, p. 423.

**Sakai.** Ocular Tension in Young People. Nippon Gank. Zachi, June.

**Shumway, E. A.** Secondary Glaucoma in Interstitial Keratitis. Sec. on Ophth. Coll., Phys. Phila., March 21, April 18.

**Stoll, K. L.** Schiötz Tonometer (Bibl.) Lancet-Clin., cviii, p. 41.

**Suzuki, K.** Glaucoma. Würzburg Diss.

**Teulières.** Sclerectomy With or Without Iridectomy. Arch d'Opht., xxxii, p. 287.

**Toczyski, F.** Tests of Normal and Glaucomatous Eyes with Schiotz' Tonometer. Klin. M. f. Augenh., June, p. 727.

**Wallenberg, T.** Juvenile Glaucoma. Verhandl. d. Gesellsch. Deutsch. Nat. u. Aerzte., lxxxii, p. 308.

Repeated Titles. **Bettremieux** (ii, p. 7) Ophth. Rev., xxx, p. 204. **Bjerrum** (ii, p. 7) Amer. Jour. Ophth., xxix, p. 190. **Dolganoff** (ii, p. 55) Ophth. Rev., xxx, p. 203.

## LENS.

**Cusner.** Clearing of Traumatic Cataract. Soc. Belge d'Opht., No. 33, p. 31.

**De Obarrio, P.** Persistent Conjunctival Hyperemia After Cataract Extraction. Ann. de Oft., xv, p. 6.

**Ellett, E. C.** Cataract Extraction with Corneal Suture. So. Med. Jour., June.

**Elschnig.** Simple Flap Extraction of Senile Cataract with Peripheral Incision of Iris. Arch. of Ophth., xli, p. 342.

Therapy of Senile Cataract. Med. Klin., viii, p. 1097.

**Hess, C.** Remarks on Elschnig's Article on Cataract Extraction. Arch. of Ophth., xli, p. 349.

**Hilbert, R.** Lamellar Cataract Through Four Generations. Münch. Med. Woch., lix, p. 1272.

**Marquez.** Post-operative Complications of Cataract. Arch. de Oft., xii, p. 240.

**Moreau.** Extraction of Lens in Capsule. Soc. Fr. d'Opht., May.

**Myers, D. W.** Sixty-five Consecutive Cataract Extractions. Jour. Ophth. Otol. and Laryngol., xviii, p. 277.

**Onishi.** Stretching of Iris in Cataract Extraction Without Iridectomy. Nippon Gank. Zachi, March.

**Pagenstecher, H. E.** Experimental Studies on Genesis of Congenital

Cataract and Malformations. Arch. f. Vergleich. Ophth., ii, p. 424 Ophthalmoscope, x, p. 383.

**Posey, W. C.** Congenital Dislocation of Lens. Wills Hosp. Ophth. Soc., April 1.

**Risley, S. D.** Traumatic Cataract; Copper Scales in Vitreous. Ibid.

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# Abstracts From Foreign Journals

**Gonin, J. The Blind Visual Field in Hemianopsia.** (Annales d'Ocul., cxlv, page 1.)

Bard has maintained that in so-called absolute homonymous hemianopsia the sensation of light is never entirely abolished from the blind field; and Bard's conclusions have been accepted by Rochon-Duvigneaud in his description of hemianopsia in the French Encyclopedia of Ophthalmology. Gonin therefore discusses one by one the experiments upon which Bard based his argument. Speaking generally, it is urged that, in judging the ability of the blind retinal area to receive light impressions, Bard failed to take into account the play of light and shade on objects in the room, or on the patient's nose; although such indirect effects of the illuminant would be sufficient to indicate its general position to the healthy part of the retina.

One of Bard's tests consisted of throwing on to the cornea from the blind part of the field a feeble light from a mirror placed at a distance. According to Gonin the patient's declaration that the light was increased in this direction depended upon illumination of the corresponding side of the nose. In another test, made in the dark room a candle was brought from behind into the blind field; in this case Gonin attributes the positive results to a diffuse illumination of the sclero-corneal limbus. A hemianopsic patient will have acquired superior power of localization by means of such subtle indications. As a control test Gonin "canalized" the light through a long tube, concentrating it by means of a convex lens inside the tube; the patient then became unable to detect the light. Gonin concludes that we are not justified in surrendering the classic conception of an absolute hemianopsia.

**Königstein, L. Biology of the Lens.** (Archiv f. Augenh., lxviii, page 414).

A number of rabbits were immunized to an extract of lenses from cattle's eyes, subcutaneous injections of the extract being given at

stated intervals. The serum of the rabbits so treated was then tested as to its power of preventing the hemolysis which would normally be produced by the same lens extract when used as an antigen. Only one out of seven serums so tested partly failed to prevent hemolysis. A further series of tests was then made with non-homologous lens extracts, including those of the horse, rabbit and hen. The reactions are tabulated and are expressed in the author's conclusions, which follow: By immunising with the lens substance of cattle there are produced in the rabbit not only precipitins and anaphylactic bodies, but also complement-binding antibodies. These last are active (bind the complement) not only with the homologous cattle lens, but also with the lenses of other species, such as the horse, rabbit and hen; although to a lesser degree in the cases of the rabbit and hen. The antibodies produced by lens substance therefore resemble the corresponding precipitins and anaphylactic bodies, in that their action is not specific for the species. As the tests of the reactions of cattle, horse, rabbit and hen serum, respectively, with the lens antibodies show no deviation of the complement, such antibodies must be described as specific for the organ.

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**Seefelder, R. Anatomic Finding in a Case of Congenital Ectopia of the Pupil With Luxation of the Lens.** (Zeitschr. f. Augenh., xxv, page 353).

The eye had been enucleated on account of pain in absolute glaucoma. The patient was a man of 53 years. In both eyes the pupil was displaced down and in. Microscopic study showed the following conditions: The iris was heavily pigmented, and the sphincter strongly developed. The lower inner pupillary margin, including the sphincter, was turned back in the form of a hook, and was in intimate connection with a broad cord, composed at its origin of vessels, connective tissue and numerous pigment cells. This structure became gradually smaller and merged into vitreous fibrils and zonular fibers, by means of which it was directly attached to the pars ciliaris retinae behind the ciliary processes. The vascular system of the cord was fed by two large arteries arising from the vessels of the iris. The whole pupillary area was occupied by a persistent pupillary membrane, whose vessels communicated with those of both the iris and the cord. The development of the ciliary processes and of the zonule of Zinn was rudimentary.

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**Valude, E. Unilateral Hysteric Amaurosis.** (Annales d'Ocul. 145, p. 87).

A girl of 16 years complained of having completely lost the sight of the left eye for a period of eighteen months. Since the age of 12 years the patient had been subject to attacks of loss of consciousness lasting ten minutes. The left eye was slightly deviated outwards, but appeared otherwise normal, including especially the pupil reactions. There was no light perception, nor did tests with a strong convex sphere over the right eye, or with the diploscope, furnish any evidence of simulation, or of binocular vision. Use of the giant magnet while the left eye was kept shut; and simulated operations on the left eye, were followed by improvement to a visual acuity of 1/10. But no binocular vision could be demonstrated with the diploscope, and the vision of 1/10 in the left eye was only obtained when the right eye was covered by a black disc, the use before the right eye of a strong convex sphere being attended with return of complete amaurosis of the left eye. The author is satisfied that the patient's statement of amaurosis was honestly made, although the blindness was of hysteric origin.